



THE LIBERTY BOYS OF '76

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NEW YORK, APRIL 11, 1902.

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THE LIBERTY BOYS' BATTLE FOR LIFE;

OR, THE HARDEST STRUGGLE OF ALL.

By HARRY MOORE



Just as the British Officer was going to put the noose around Dick Slater's neck, there came a volley from the Liberty Boys' muskets, and the officer fell dead. Dick started away at full speed.

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CHAPTER I.

A TERRIBLE PUNISHMENT.

"Ah-ha! I have you now, Major Murdock—murderer at you are!"

"Hold, man! Don't fire!"

"Oh, I won't; never you fear!" with a wild, blood-chilling laugh. "No, I won't fire unless you make it necessary for me to do so."

"Who are you?"

"Who am I?"

"Yes."

"I am an avenger!"

"An avenger?"

"Aye!"

"I don't know what that has to do with me."

"You don't?"

"No."

"Well, I do—ha, ha, ha!"

"Explain your meaning."

"Oh, I'll explain, never fear!"

"Do so, then."

It was a strange, a thrilling scene. Two men stood in the middle of a road which wound through the timber like some huge snake. One of the men was a British officer—for the time was the summer of 1780—and he was a major, judging by his uniform. He was a dark-faced, wicked-looking man, one on whose face the marks of dissipation had set their seal.

The other man was dressed roughly, after the fashion of the settlers of the South, and in his hands was a long, dangerous-looking rifle which was leveled full at the British officer. The place of this strange meeting was in north-central South Carolina, about three miles west of Winnsboro, and two miles from the Congaree River.

"So you want me to explain, do you?" the man with the rifle asked, slowly and deliberately.

"Yes," the officer replied; "explain—or better still let me go on my way."

The other laughed hoarsely. "I shan't let you go on

your way, Major Murdock—oh, no! Don't think that for a moment. I have some important business to transact with you, and when I get through I don't think you will be in a condition to go anywhere!"

This was said in such a tone as to almost freeze the blood in the veins of the British officer; there was no doubt that the man was in deadly earnest, and there was a fierce, almost wild light in his eyes which boded ill for the man with the uniform on.

"What do you mean?" asked the other, his voice almost trembling, strong man though he was.

"What do I mean?"

"Yes."

"You really wish to know?"

"Either tell me what you mean, and what you intend doing, or let me go on my way. Don't keep me standing here."

"Very well; I will tell you. First, let me recall something to your mind."

"Go ahead."

"One month ago to-day, Major Murdock, you were in command of a party of redcoats which came over across the Catawba River from Camden, and foraged and pillaged among the patriot people of this vicinity. Is this not so?"

"I won't say whether it is or not," was the sullen reply; "you are telling the story, go on and tell it."

"All right!" almost fiercely, "I will do so. Among the patriot homes visited by your party was that of a man named James Sherlock."

The man paused and the officer said: "I don't know whether that was the name of the owner of one of the homes visited or not."

"Ah-ha! you acknowledge that you were in command of the party in question!" the other exclaimed. "I knew it, however, so you are not hurting yourself any by acknowledging the truth. You know that the name of the owner of one of the homes was Sherlock, too, if you would only acknowledge it."

"Well, supposing I do acknowledge it, what then?"

"You will soon learn. At the home of this James Sher-

lock you found a woman, a girl of eighteen years and a boy of twelve."

The man paused and waited for the officer to say something, but he maintained silence, so the former continued:

"You became enamored of the pretty face of the girl and was going to carry her away. The woman and the boy interfered, and the boy shot one of your men dead. This made you angry and you murdered the woman and the boy and burned the house to the ground; after which you made a prisoner of the girl and carried her away. Is this not true?"

The officer had grown somewhat pale as the other talked, but now an angry, defiant expression came over his dark face and he nodded his head.

"It is true," he said.

"Of course it is true; I know it is true. And it is just as well that you acknowledge it, too, Major Murdock, for it would do you no good to deny it."

"Well, I shall not deny it; but what about it? What is it to you?"

"What is it to me?" There was a peculiar intonation to the man's voice.

"Yes, what is it to you?"

"Well, it is a good deal to me, as you will no doubt acknowledge when you hear my name."

"Well, what is your name?"

"James Sherlock!"

The man shot the words out fiercely and the look which he bent on the British officer would have frozen the blood of one with weaker nerves than those possessed by the major. He had fortified himself for an unpleasant disclosure, however, and he laughed harshly and said: "I suspected as much."

"Ah, you did?"

"Yes."

"You had an idea that I was James Sherlock, eh?"

"Yes."

"You are pretty smart, aren't you?"

"Well, I rate myself as being pretty shrewd."

"You do, eh?"

"I do."

"Do you think you were doing a shrewd thing when you murdered that innocent woman and boy and carried away that poor girl to a fate which is worse than death?"

"I think so," defiantly.

A dark look came over the face of the other. "You are simply fortifying me in the determination which I have formed—that of punishing you for your crime as

no other living being was ever punished!" he said in a cold, deadly voice.

"You can't frighten me," the officer said; "and I will just say that if you harm me in any way you will be killed by my comrades with as little compunction as if you were a worthless cur! Do you hear?"

The other smiled—a cold smile, which was more dangerous than a frown or a spoken threat. "Yes, I heard the reply; "and now listen to me: I have held you up here for a purpose."

"I supposed as much."

"Well, since you are so knowing, will you tell me what the purpose is?"

"Oh, I suppose you are thinking of having revenge for the wrong which you are pleased to think I have done to you." The officer tried to speak carelessly, but his voice trembled slightly, and it was evident that he was laboring under a feeling of fear, notwithstanding the fact that he wore an outward air of sang froid.

The man nodded. "That is just what I am going to do!" he said. "But with all your smartness I do not think you can guess in what way I am going to be avenged upon you."

"I shall not try to guess," was the sullen reply.

"It would be useless for you to do so as you could not guess it in a hundred years. Suffice it to say that it will, as I said a while ago, be such a punishment as was never before inflicted upon one human being by another."

"Indeed?" in a sneering voice.

"Yes, 'indeed!' You will think so before I am through with you, you cowardly woman and boy murderer and girl stealer!"

"Oh, well," impatiently, "if you are going to do anything, do it and don't talk so much about it."

It was evident that the major was trying to brave it out, and make out that he was not afraid by assuming an air of bravado; but it did not deceive the man, who smiled in a cold, scornful manner.

"Oh, very well, since you are in a hurry," he said calmly, "I will get to work. First, take off your sword and belt containing your pistols and throw them on the ground."

The officer hesitated, but the man shook the rifle threateningly. "I give you until I count ten to obey," he said coldly. "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven——"

"Hold!" cried the major, "I will do as you say."

"Very well, do so—but mind you make no attempt to draw and use a weapon. If you do it will be the signal

your death, for I shall put a bullet straight through your black heart!"

The officer shuddered. There was something so fierce about the man's tone and air as to give him a feeling of terror. "I am afraid I am up against a great danger," said to himself, and then aloud: "I shall make no attempt to use a weapon."

"It will be well for you not to do so!"

The major took off his sword and threw it on the ground; and then he unbuckled the belt and tossed it down beside the sword.

"Good!" said James Sherlock. "Now put your hands behind you and turn your back to me."

The officer obeyed.

"Don't move or attempt to resist," warned the man; "if you do it will bring your evil life to a close, now and here. Do you understand?"

"I understand that I am trapped, and that at present I am helpless," was the snarling reply; "so go ahead and do what you please. It will be my turn later on."

"I doubt it!" was the significant reply; "I think you have about run your course, you redecoat butcher!"

There is little doubt that had the British officer known what was in store for him he would have whirled and made fight for his life, then and there; but he did not know, and so he bottled up his rage at being talked to in such a manner, and submitted to having his arms bound—and the instant this had been accomplished his last hope of escaping death at the hands of this man whom he had so terribly wronged was dashed to the ground.

James Sherlock picked up the belt of weapons and the sword and buckled them on his own person; then he turned to the frowning officer and said: "Come with me."

"Where are you going?" the other asked, a tremor in his voice.

"You will learn soon enough."

The British officer held back and was averse to accompanying the other. Too late he realized that he was absolutely helpless and wholly in the man's power, and he feared, judging by the look in the man's eyes, that he was in for some terrible experience. It did him no good to hold back now, however, for the other seized him by the arm and forced him to walk.

They left the road and entered the timber and walked in almost a due westerly direction. This was kept up for three-quarters of an hour, during which time not a dozen words were spoken by the two, and then they came to the Broad River at a point a mile above where it, in conjunction with the Ennoree, becomes the Congaree. Turn-

ing abruptly to the right, James Sherlock conducted his prisoner along the bank of the river a distance of a mile, and then came to a stop at a point where the stream was not more than fifty feet wide. At this point the water rushed along swiftly, flowing past numerous rocks which stuck up above the surface, and numerous trees overhung the stream, the limbs extending far out over the water.

Major Murdock looked at his captor with an inquiring, anxious expression in his eyes. The other understood it, and said:

"You will soon understand the meaning of this, Major Murdock; but before we go any farther in the matter, I am going to ask you: Is my daughter alive?"

The major nodded. "Yes, she's alive," he replied, hesitatingly.

"Where is she?"

The British officer made no reply.

"You refuse to tell me?"

The other nodded. "I will not tell you," he replied.

"You had better!" threateningly.

The other smiled sarcastically. "You may think I am a fool, but I am not," he said; "I shall not tell you—at any rate, not unless you first let me have my liberty and agree not to bother me again in any way."

"And not avenge the death of my wife and boy?" in a hoarse, angry voice. "I shall make no such agreement."

"Then your daughter will die of starvation; for no other living person besides myself knows where she is."

"You had better tell where she is!" said Mr. Sherlock, in a threatening voice.

"Not unless you give me my freedom."

"That I shall not do; you are doomed!"

"What are you going to do?"

"You will soon learn."

Sherlock then took the major's belt and taking the pistols out of the holsters, buckled the belt around the prisoner's ankles. This done, he seated the major at the foot of a tree and proceeded to unwind a buckskin thong from around his own waist. It was under his coat and had escaped the notice of the other until this moment; then, as his eyes fell upon the thong, the major gave a start and turned pale.

"What are you going to do with that?" he asked.

"You will soon see," was the grim reply.

When Mr. Sherlock had unwound the thong he made a noose in one end and then proceeded to climb the tree under which the major was seated. He climbed up till he came to a limb which extended straight out at right angles with the trunk, and then made his way out on this

limb. There were other limbs above, extending in the same direction, and by holding to these it was not a difficult matter to make his way out as far as he wished to go. Mr. Sherlock paused when he was right above a rock which extended a foot above the surface of the water, at just about the middle of the swift-flowing stream. Here he bent down and tied the end of the thong to the limb on which he was standing, and dropped the noose end. Then he climbed back to the ground, and, unbuckling the belt from around the major's legs, assisted him to rise.

"Come," the man said, and he led the officer toward the water.

Major Murdock held back. "W-what are y-you going t-to d-do?" he asked, stammeringly.

"You will soon see for yourself," was the grim reply; "come along. It will do you no good to hold back."

The major was becoming almost too weak from fear of what was coming to offer much resistance, and he suffered himself to be led to the water and into it. The water was only about knee-deep, and as the weather was warm, getting the feet wet would not be likely to do injury.

When they reached the rock which stuck out a foot above the water, Mr. Sherlock paused and said: "Climb up onto that rock."

The major did not move. He began to realize what was coming, and was beginning to feel desperate.

"Up with you!" said Sherlock, almost savagely. "Hurry!"

But the major had at last made up his mind to make a fight for his life—had decided when it was too late! He suddenly tried to break loose from his captor, with the intention of trying to reach the opposite bank of the river and making his escape.

His attempt was futile. Mr. Sherlock was strong, and he easily held the man, whose arms were securely bound; more, he actually lifted the officer and stood him on the rock, and reaching up quickly, slipped the noose over the doomed man's head and drew it tight enough so that it could not be thrown off by a toss of the head. This done he quickly stepped back, the major almost falling off the rock as he was freed, and the thong tightened and pulled upward. The top of the rock was moist and slippery, too, and this made it difficult for the officer to maintain his position there.

James Sherlock made his way quickly back to the bank of the river and pausing there, looked back at his victim, a look of pleasure and satisfaction on his face.

For the first few moments Major Murdock was so paralyzed with horror as a result of his terrible position that

he was incapable of uttering a sound, and all he could do was to maintain his place on the top of the stone—which was no easy feat, the top being slippery, and the rushing waters having a tendency to make him dizzy. He realized that to fall from the rock would be to doom himself to death by strangulation at the end of the thong, however, and he managed to keep his position.

Then he found his voice and began to beg for his release from the terrible position. He begged and pleaded, for the man on the shore was inexorable. "You murdered my wife and son," was the cold reply, "and you carried my beloved daughter away. There is no punishment too severe for the sins which you have committed. You have forfeited your life a hundred times over, and if there were another style of death that I could think of that would be more terrible than this one to which I have doomed you, I would adopt it. I can think of no other that would be bad, however; I might torture you at the stake as the red Indians do their victims, but the pain would too soon be ended. In this way you will suffer perhaps for hours, only to slip off the rock at last and perish miserably at the end of the halter—as you deserve to do!"

"Oh, man, shoot me!" pleaded the miserable wretch on the rock. "Have you no pity?"

"What pity did you show to my beloved wife and son, and to my darling daughter?" was the stern reply.

Then the doomed man burst forth in a torrent of curses and called his executioner all the vile names he could think of, the other sitting there, unmoved, through it all. "You had better be praying!" was all he said when the other finally ceased on account of exhaustion.

There was a good-sized stone lying near the water's edge, and Mr. Sherlock seated himself on this stone, and with his rifle lying across his lap he watched the doomed man with a look of stony calm on his own face. Evidently he was determined to remain and keep guard till the end came. He had waited long for his revenge, and he would not let the victim have the least chance to escape the terrible fate which threatened him.

An hour passed, and then the British officer said: "I will tell you where your daughter is if you will let me go free."

"I have already told you that I cannot agree to any such terms," was the cold reply.

Again the doomed man burst forth in a torrent of abuse for his executioner, and he cursed in a way to make one's hair stand on end; but the one hearer listened with a stony calm that would almost indicate that he did not hear.

Another hour and then the man on the stone said: "I

will tell you where your daughter is if you will agree to shoot me dead and end my misery."

"I will promise nothing of the kind," was the cold reply; "the blood of my loved ones calls aloud for vengeance!"

A groan escaped the lips of the British officer. At last he was beginning to understand that he was doomed—doomed to a death most terrible. Indeed, the two hours just past and the hours to come, until he should lose his footing and fall from the rock, were fraught with torture the most intense, and this it was that made the affair so terrible. Had the major had the courage to throw himself off the rock he might have ended it very quickly, and made the grim avenger's vengeance less satisfactory—but he did not have the courage to do it. Instinctively he clung to life, and would not lose his footing on the rock if he could help it.

Finally, as a forlorn hope, he told the stern watcher where he would find his daughter.

"Now," he said, pleadingly, "please let me go free?"

"You will be free when you are dead; not before!" was the cold, grim reply.

"But I have told you where your daughter is."

"You did so of your own accord—and I have no means of knowing that you have told the truth."

"Oh, I have told you the truth!" eagerly; "and she is unharmed, too—I swear it! She was so beautiful that I really fell in love with her and asked her to marry me. She refused, and scorned me, but I did not injure her, for I hoped that she would learn to love me and would consent to marry me, a British officer. Please let me go?"

"Never! The blood of my wife and son are calling aloud for vengeance!"

"Then, for the love of heaven, shoot me and put an end to my misery!"

"I will not! I shall do nothing to in any way lessen the torture which you suffer. I wish I could make it greater. If you wish to end the matter, leap from the rock."

Then the doomed man lifted up his voice and shrieked and yelled in a mad frenzy; he cursed and yelled, and prayed; he was like a crazy man—but the man sat quietly on the stone and watched and listened stonily.

CHAPTER II.

ANNIE SHERLOCK.

"What is that?"

"It sounds like some one yelling."

"Yes, like some one shrieking!"

"I wonder what is the trouble? It sounds like a human voice."

"So it does; let's go over in that direction and see what is going on."

"All right."

Two youths of perhaps twenty years were making their way through the timber, and they had suddenly paused and exchanged remarks as given above.

They were bronzed youths and rather roughly dressed, but they were handsome fellows and manly looking. They set out, now, and walked rapidly in the direction from which the sound came which had attracted their attention. As they moved along the sound became louder and plainer, and they could make out that it was indeed a human voice. Presently they could understand what was being said, and as the curses and prayers came to their ears they paused and looked at each other in wondering amazement.

"What does it mean, Dick?" asked one.

"I hardly know, Bob," was the reply; "it sounds like the ravings of a madman."

"So it does."

"Well, come along; let's see what is the trouble."

"I'm with you; but hadn't we better look to our weapons?"

"It wouldn't be a bad idea."

The youths drew their pistols and then stole forward, for they did not know what they might run upon. They had advanced perhaps fifty yards, when suddenly they paused and stared in open-mouthed amazement.

They had come upon a strange scene—strange and terrible in the extreme. Out in the middle of a stream, on the bank of which they now stood, but fifty yards further upstream, standing on a rock, was a man; around his neck was a noose, and the thong in which the noose was made reached upward and was fastened to the overhanging limb of a tree. Seated on a stone on the shore was a man, across whose lap lay a long rifle.

The two youths stared in silent amazement, not unmixed with horror. There was something terrible in the picture of the man standing there on the brink of the grave, crying, cursing and praying, and there was something almost awe-inspiring in the attitude of the lone watcher, who sat there gazing stonily upon the doomed wretch on the stone in midstream.

The youths stared for a few moments in silent wonder and amazement, and then looked at each other.

"What does it mean, Dick?" gasped the one who had been addressed as Bob.

The other shook his head. "I don't know, Bob," was the reply; "it is a very strange affair."

"You are right; do you suppose a wrong is being perpetrated here?"

The other did not reply at once, and when he did he said slowly: "I would not like to say whether I think so or not, Bob; there is one thing that makes me think that perhaps only justice is being done, however."

"And what is that?"

"The fact that the man standing out there on the rock, with the noose around his neck, is a redcoat."

"There is no doubt that he is a redcoat; his uniform proves that. But why should the fact make you think it possible that only justice is being done?"

"I'll tell you, Bob. We have had a good deal of experience with redcoats, and have learned that they are likely to take advantage of their superior force and commit crimes that would not be countenanced under any other circumstances."

"Yes, I know that."

"Well, have you noticed that the man sitting on the stone on the shore is a settler—a farmer, evidently?"

"Yes, I have noticed it."

"Well, perhaps the redcoat has wronged the old man, and he is wreaking vengeance on the head of the man who committed the wrong."

"It is possible."

"Yes, it is possible; but we will find out just what is going on. Come; we will interview the old man, and if he cannot make out a pretty strong case against the redcoat we will make him stop torturing the fellow."

"All right; I'm with you. Go ahead."

The two advanced, and were almost upon the man before he knew of their presence. Then he leaped to his feet and held his rifle in a threatening manner.

"Who are you and what do you want here?" he almost snarled. It was evident that he fancied the strangers might interfere with his arrangements with regard to the punishment of the redcoat.

"We are friends, I think," replied the youth who had been called Dick by his comrade; "but I wish to ask a few questions."

The man on the stone in the middle of the stream heard the new voices and managed to turn his head and get a look at the newcomers. "Oh, save me, friends!" he cried. "Save me from this demon!"

"If you try to free that scoundrel you will first have to kill me!" said Mr. Sherlock, a fierce expression in his

eyes as he fingered his rifle nervously and glared at the youths.

"We are not going to take any hand in the affair, one way or another, until we know the rights of it," replied the youth who had first spoken.

The man with the rifle nodded approvingly. "That is the way to talk," he said; "you look like fair-minded young men, and I believe you are. I will tell you the reason for this strange situation, and then you can judge for yourselves."

"Go ahead," said Dick; "we shall be pleased to hear your story."

"Yes, yes!" said Bob, eagerly.

The man pointed toward the officer standing on the stone, the noose around his neck. "Do you see that man—no, I will not say man!—demon is the proper word. Do you see him?" he asked.

The youths nodded. "Yes," they replied in unison.

"Well, when you look upon him you see the biggest scoundrel that you ever beheld in all your life."

"Go on," said Dick.

"That man, as his uniform indicates, is a major in the British army. He came over in this part of the country nearly a month ago, and with his party of men, all scoundrels like himself, robbed and pillaged the patriot homes of this neighborhood. At my house his evil eyes rested upon the face of my daughter, a beautiful, pure and good girl, and he was going to take her away when they got ready to go. My wife Mary, and my son Tom, aged twelve, interfered to save Annie, and both were murdered in cold blood and my home was burned to the ground; then the fiend carried my darling daughter away, and I have not laid eyes on her face since. I swore to be avenged—to have a terrible revenge, and, young strangers, I am having it. Now, do you blame me?"

"Not if you are sure you have the man who did the deed," replied Dick.

"I am sure of it. I learned that Major Murdock was the man, and this is Major Murdock; then, too, he acknowledged it all to me to-day and I know he is the man. He told me where I would find my daughter, so there can be no mistake. He is the man."

"Then I do not blame you for what you have done."

"Nor do I!" declared Bob; "the redcoats do too much of that sort of thing, and something should be done to put a stop to it. If a few more of them got served in this fashion it would be a good thing."

"And you will not interfere in any way to prevent me from having my revenge?"

"No, we will not interfere. It is no affair of ours. Besides, we have seen a great deal of the kind of work that you have said this man has been doing, and we have no sympathy to waste on such a man as this one evidently is."

"Good!" said Mr. Sherlock. "You are honest men, and gentlemen. May I ask, what are your names?"

"Yes," replied the one who had done most of the talking; "my name is Dick Slater, and my comrade is Bob Estabrook."

Mr. Sherlock started. "Dick Slater, did you say?" he exclaimed.

The youth nodded. "That is my name," he replied.

"I have heard of a young man by the name of Dick Slater—but he was in the North."

"We are from the North," said Bob.

"You are?"

"Yes."

The man eyed the two closely. "Can it be possible that you are the Dick Slater I have heard so much about?" he said, eyeing Dick eagerly.

The youth smiled. "I am the only Dick Slater I have ever heard of," he said.

"And you are from the North?"

"Yes, we are from the North."

"But the Dick Slater I mean was the captain of a company of young men who call themselves 'The Liberty Boys of '76.'"

The youth nodded again. "I am the captain of such a company," he remarked quietly.

"You don't say!" the man exclaimed. "Then you are the real Dick Slater?"

"Yes."

"Shake hands, young man!" extending his hand. "I have long wished that I might see you. I have heard many wonderful stories regarding the doings of yourself and your brave 'Liberty Boys.' Shake hands!"

Dick shook hands with the man, as did Bob also. Just at this moment they were startled by a wild shriek from the man on the slippery rock out in the middle of the stream, and they looked and saw him slip off the rock and hang struggling at the end of the stout thong. The doomed man made desperate efforts to get his feet back on the rock, and indeed he touched the top two or three times, but he could not succeed, and gradually his struggles grew weaker until at last he straightened out and hung motionless above the rushing waters.

"He is dead!" said Dick.

"And deserved the fate that overtook him!" said Mr. Sherlock.

"He certainly did!" agreed Bob. "What are you going to do—cut him down?"

"No; I am going to let his body hang there as a warning to any of his comrades who may happen along this way."

"That is as good a thing to do as any," said Dick.

"Now, what is next on the programme?" asked Bob.

"I am going to where he said my daughter was hidden, and see if she is there," said Mr. Sherlock.

"How far is it from here?" asked Dick.

"About a mile."

"Then we'll go with you."

They were about to turn away when they heard footsteps, and the next instant a young man of about twenty years stood beside them. He paid no attention to the three, however; his eyes were fixed on the body swaying backward and forward at the end of the thong.

Dick and Bob stared at the newcomer in wonderment, but Mr. Sherlock did not seem surprised. "It is George Davis," he whispered in Dick's ear; "he and my daughter were engaged, and he has been nearly wild ever since she was stolen away by the British scoundrel."

"Ah!" whispered Dick, nodding understandingly; "and then he told Bob who the young man was. Both watched the young fellow with eyes of sympathy, for they could understand what a terrible strain he had been under.

Presently the young man turned his eyes upon Mr. Sherlock, and, ignoring the presence of the youths, pointed toward the swaying body and said: "Is it really him, Mr. Sherlock? Is it really the scoundrel, the demon who murdered your wife and son and stole Annie away?"

Mr. Sherlock nodded. "It is," he replied; "Major Murdock will never again cause honest people unhappiness, George."

The young man burst into half-hysterical laughter. "Good! Good!" he cried. "I am glad the fiend is dead—but I would have liked to have been the death of him myself. Still, I guess you had the better right to inflict the punishment upon him."

"I did it for both of us, George."

"Yes, yes; so you did, and I am glad you did it! But did—did he—say—anything about—about—Annie?"

There was an eager light in the eyes of the young man as he gazed beseechingly into the face of his sweetheart's father.

"Yes, George; he told me where Annie is hidden, and we were just starting there when you came."

"Oh, let us go at once!" the young man cried. "Let us hasten!"

Mr. Sherlock laid his hand on the youth's head. "Remember, George, we must not expect too much," he said gently; "the scoundrel may have told the truth, and he may not."

"Oh, maybe he told the truth! He was standing on the brink of eternity; surely he would have told the truth!"

"I think so—I hope so; but we must be prepared to be disappointed, George."

"Yes, I understand that; and did he—did he—say anything about—about Annie?"

"He said that she was well and unharmed, George."

"Oh, thank heaven for that!" the young man exclaimed.

"But remember, we must not take it for granted that he has told the truth," said Mr. Sherlock soberly; "we must be prepared for possible disappointment and additional sorrows."

"Where is she, Mr. Sherlock?"

"A mile up the river, in a cavern."

"I know the place!" cried George Davis; "I know where it is, and it is strange that I did not think of it long ago! Oh, why did I not think of that cavern? I have searched everywhere else—why should I have forgotten the existence of that cavern just when I should have remembered it?"

"I know not, Gorge; it is the same with me. I knew of its existence, but did not think of it when looking for Annie. But come; we will hasten there and see if the scoundrel told the truth."

The four hastened away, keeping along the bank of the river, and as they walked Mr. Sherlock told George who their companions were, and the youth greeted Dick and Bob in a friendly manner. The farther they went, and the closer they came to their destination, the more rational, seemingly, did George Davis become, and by the time they reached the cavern he was almost himself again.

Dick and Bob were sorry for the young fellow, and hoped that his sweetheart would be found, alive and well, as the redcoat officer had said she was.

They reached the entrance to the cavern and hastened to enter. As they did so they saw a fire blazing at the farther end of the cavern, and before it were seated two British soldiers playing cards. Over to one side was a girl reclining on a pile of blankets.

With a cry of joy George Davis leaped toward the spot where his sweetheart lay, and the redcoats sprang to their feet and faced the newcomers, giving utterance to exclamations of amazement and anger. They would have drawn weapons, but they saw that they were covered by the pistols

of the two youths, and the rifle of the man, and Dick Slater's ringing voice called out:

"Hands up! Don't attempt to draw weapons or you are dead men!"

CHAPTER III.

THE ESCAPE.

"Who are you?" cried one of the redcoats.

"We are friends of the girl whom you have been holding a prisoner here!" was the prompt reply.

"And this gentleman is her father!" said Bob.

The two uttered curses under their breath. "What do you mean to do with us?" one asked sullenly.

"We are going to make prisoners of you," replied Dick, quietly; "so please place your weapons on the floor and turn your backs to us and place your hands behind you."

The two redcoats obeyed, though with a sullen air. Evidently they did not like to give up without a struggle; yet they dared not attempt to offer resistance as they were outnumbered, and the enemy had the advantage of having weapons out and ready to use. They thus made a virtue of necessity and a few minutes later were lying on the ground, bound hand and foot.

By this time George Davis had freed his sweetheart and was hugging and kissing her and laughing in a half-hysterical way; the girl, too, doing the same. Evidently both were extremely happy.

Mr. Sherlock now advanced, and when the girl saw her father she leaped into his arms. "Oh, father, is it indeed you?" she cried. "I am so glad to see you! Oh, I am so glad that you and George have come to my rescue!"

Mr. Sherlock kissed his daughter and smoothing her hair back from her forehead, gazed down into her eyes. "Did that scoundrel—have these men," indicating the prisoners, "treated you with respect, Annie?" he asked, in a hoarse whisper.

"Yes, father," was the prompt reply; "the major treated me very well, indeed. He said that he loved me and wished me to be his wife. Of course, I refused; but he held me prisoner and kept insisting that I would learn to love him in time. I don't know how it might have ended if you had not found me, but so far all is well so far as I am concerned—but mother and Tom! Oh, father, are they really dead? Those fiends really murdered them?"

A groan escaped the lips of the man as he replied:

"Yes, Annie, they are dead; the fiends killed them—but the head fiend, Major Murdock, is dead! He will never commit any more crimes. And I have you, my daughter. It is not so bad as it might have been."

"No, but—it is—is so—so terrible to think that mother and Tom are—are—dead!" The beautiful girl broke down, and sobbed on her father's breast for a few minutes, but presently became more calm.

George Davis now claimed the girl's attention, and while they were talking Dick happened to glance toward the entrance to the cavern and saw a redcoat peering in at them. The entrance was not large, and only a portion of the man's body was visible.

"We are discovered!" exclaimed Dick, and as he spoke he drew a pistol and fired a snapshot at the redcoat's face.

A wild yell of pain went up, proving that the bullet had not been entirely wasted; and the face disappeared from the opening.

"I fear we are caught in a trap!" said Dick.

"Do you think there are more of them than the one?" asked Mr. Sherlock.

"Oh, yes; I have no doubt there is a party of the scoundrels out there."

"In that case we are caught in a trap, sure enough," said Bob.

"I'm not so sure of that," said George Davis.

"What do you mean?" asked Dick.

"I mean that it is possible there is another way of getting out of this cavern."

"Do you think it possible?"

"It is possible. I know that I once penetrated a long ways back, and did not find the end of the cavern. I remember that the general trend of the floor of the cavern was upward, and I more than half believe that there is a point where it reaches the open air."

"Well, there is nothing better to do than to make the attempt to find another outlet," said Dick; "I am confident there is a party of the redcoats and we would be unable to fight them."

At this moment a voice called out from the entrance: "Hello, in there!"

"Hello, yourself!" called out Dick.

"Will you surrender?"

"No!"

"You had better!"

"Why so?"

"Because we are ten to one and can easily capture you, anyway."

"You think you can?"

"Yes."

"Why don't you come ahead and do it, then? Why call upon us to surrender?"

"For the reason that we do not wish to cause any blood to be shed if we can help it."

"Oh, that's it?"

"Yes."

"Well, if you try to enter the cavern there will be some blood shed, and it won't be ours, either!"

"That would only result in your own death. You will do better to surrender without making any attempt at fighting."

"We will do nothing of the kind. We can stand off an army, and we will not surrender!"

"But we can starve you out."

"We have two of your men in here, prisoners, and if you try to starve us out you will have to starve them, too."

"Oh, but I guess you will surrender when you get good and hungry."

"I guess that we will do nothing of the kind."

"I think you will."

"You will find that you are mistaken."

"Well, we'll give it a trial, anyway."

"All right; if you like."

Mr. Sherlock and the three youths consulted together and tried to make up their minds regarding what would be the best thing for them to do, and finally they decided to try to find another exit from the cavern.

"They will stand guard over the entrance, yonder," said Dick; "and there will be no chance to escape. Our only chance lies in finding another exit."

"Shall we take the two prisoners with us?" asked Bob.

"Yes; if we are pursued we may be able to use them as a threat against our pursuers, and thus make them keep their distance."

"That's right; it will be best to take them along."

The legs of the prisoners were freed and the two were assisted to rise, after which the party stole away, going back into the depths of the cavern.

George Davis was in the lead, as he had once explored the cavern quite a distance, and behind him was Annie, then her father. Next were the two prisoners, and behind them were Dick and Bob.

They made their way forward as rapidly as the darkness and uneven surface of the floor would permit, this being not very rapid as may well be supposed. They listened, to see if they could hear sounds of pursuit, and for a while could hear nothing of the kind.

They began to think that they were to be allowed to

make the attempt to escape without being pursued, but presently they heard the sound of voices behind them.

"They have discovered that we are trying to get away," said Dick.

"Yes," replied Bob; "and they are coming after us."

"You are right. Well, I am not much afraid of them. What I fear most is that we will be unable to find another exit, and that we may even be so unfortunate as to get lost in here."

"I don't think there is much danger of that, Dick."

"I hope not."

"No," said George Davis, "there is only the one cavern, and so there is not much danger of getting lost. The only thing to fear is that there is no other exit."

They made their way along as rapidly as was possible in the darkness, and every once in a while they would hear the sound of voices behind them.

"They are still after us," said Bob.

"Yes," replied Dick; "they are afraid that we may succeed in finding another way out of the cavern."

"I hope we will succeed in doing so."

"So do I. It will be bad for us if we do not."

Onward they went, stumbling over the uneven surface of the floor, and they could not make very fast time under such circumstances. Still, their enemies would be laboring under the same difficulties and could not go any faster.

Onward for, it seemed to them, hours, and at last it seemed to be growing lighter.

"We must be approaching an exit!" said George Davis, joyously. "It is becoming light."

"So it is!" coincided Annie. "Oh, I hope we will find an exit and be able to make our escape from those terrible redcoats!"

A few minutes later they came to a point where the floor of the cavern sloped upward at a great angle. Indeed it was just about all they could do to climb it, it was so steep. They did manage to do so, however, and finally they came out at a point where there was a small, cell-like compartment, and above their heads, a distance of four feet was an opening a couple of feet in diameter.

"How will we get out?" asked George.

"We'll boost you up, George, and then you can pull one of us up and we will pull the rest up," said Dick.

He and Bob boosted George up and he managed to climb through the opening; then Mr. Sherlock and Dick boosted Bob up and George pulled at him from above, and the "Liberty Boy" was speedily out of the cavern.

Then Bob and George pulled Annie up, and then Mr. Sherlock, and last of all came Dick. It had already been

decided to leave the two prisoners, as their comrades were coming nearer every moment and would speedily be there.

"Now we had better get away from here as quickly as possible," said Dick. "The question is: Where shall we go?"

"We will go to my home," said George Davis; "these folks will be glad to have us come, and they will be tickled nearly to death when they learn that Annie is alive and safe."

"How far is it from here?" asked Dick.

"Two miles."

"Very well; you and Miss Annie go on ahead, and Bob and I and Mr. Sherlock will stay back and see how many of the redcoats there are. If not too many, we will give them a fight."

"I'd like to have a few shots at them myself," said George; "but I'll do as you say, this time."

He and Annie set out and Dick and Bob and Mr. Sherlock concealed themselves behind trees at a point fifty yards from the opening through which the redcoats would come, and watched and waited.

They watched and waited an hour, at least, but saw no signs of the redcoats.

"I guess we might as well go," finally said Mr. Sherlock. "I don't think they are going to come out of the cavern."

"I more than half suspected that they would not," said Dick; "they were afraid to stick their heads out for fear they would get bullets through them."

"That's about the size of it," agreed Bob.

Then, guided by Mr. Sherlock, the three set out for the home of George Davis.

CHAPTER IV.

THE REDCOATS LOSE THEIR HORSES.

The youths were right in their statements when they said that the redcoats were afraid to stick their heads up through the hole leading out of the cavern.

There were only six of the redcoats, and when they found their two comrades where they had been left, and learned from them that there were four of the fugitives, they decided to stay in the cavern and go back the way they had come.

"Probably those fellows are waiting outside, rifles in hand, ready to plug us between the eyes as fast as we climb out," said one of the redcoats.

The others nodded in assent to this statement. "That's just about what they are doing," said another; "so I guess we had better keep our heads away from there."

"You are right," said one of the two redcoats who had been prisoners; "two of the men out there are the father and sweetheart of the girl, and you may be sure they are anxious to get even with us for the way we treated the girl and her mother and brother."

"Well, one thing is sure, they have already got even with Major Murdock for his share in the affair!" said one of the other redcoats.

"Why, how is that?" asked the other.

"Why, Major Murdock is dead!"

"Dead?"

"Yes."

"How do you know?"

"We saw his dead body."

"When?"

"Not more than an hour ago."

"An hour ago?"

"Yes."

"Where did you see it?"

"About a mile down the river."

"You don't mean it!"

"Oh, yes, I do!"

"And the major is dead?"

"As a door-nail."

"And you think the girl's father and sweetheart did it?"

"Quite likely. The manner of the major's death proves that it was done by some one who had a big score to settle with him."

"How is that? Explain."

The redcoat did so, telling how they had seen the dead body of the major swinging at the end of the thong, above the rushing waters of the Broad River.

"The major's feet almost touched the top of a rock in midstream," went on the redcoat, "and it is evident that he stood on that rock for some time with the noose around his neck, and that at last he lost his footing and was hanged. The torture while he stood on the slippery rock must have been something terrible."

"Those two men did it, undoubtedly. Well, the major might have known that sooner or later he would bump up against some such fate. He has carried things with a high hand since coming to America."

"That is all right," said the other, savagely; "Major Murdock was a good friend to me, and I will avenge his death if I can!"

"Better let it go as it is," was the advice given; "you

may get a chance to dance on a slippery rock with a noose around your neck if you don't look out."

"I'll risk it."

The redcoats now made their way back through the long cavern, and emerged into the open air.

"Come," said one; "let us go and cut the major's body down and give it burial."

They walked rapidly down the river, and when they came to where the body swung above the waters the two redcoats who had not before seen the spectacle, stared in open-mouthed amazement and horror.

"Well, well; that is terrible!" gasped one.

"It is, for a fact!" from the other.

The redcoats had a disagreeable task ahead of them, and did not delay. A couple of them took off their boots, rolled up their trousers and waded out to the rock. One climbed up and cut the thong, and the major's body tumbled down into the water. The two then half dragged, half carried it ashore, and it took them only a few minutes to dig a grave and inter the body. When it had been covered over the redcoats took their departure, seemingly glad to get away from the spot.

They headed for Camden, and did not stop till they reached there. Then one of their number made his way to headquarters, in order to report the death of Major Murdock to Lord Rawdon, who was in command at that time.

"What's that! Major Murdock dead, you say?" Lord Rawdon exclaimed, in horrified accents. "Dear me! How did it happen? Who did it—and why?"

"Some of those rebels over across the river," was the reply; "oh, they are a bad lot, your excellency, and I wish you would let me take a force of men and go over there and teach them a lesson."

The speaker was the redcoat who had said that the major was a good friend of his, and who had threatened that he would avenge his death. He was a captain, and his name was Henry Horton.

Lord Rawdon was silent for a few moments, and then he said: "Very well, Captain Horton, you may take fifty men and go over across the river and teach the rebels a lesson, if you like."

"Thank you!" said the captain; and then, after some further conversation, he took his departure.

"I didn't tell Rawdon the real cause of Murdock's death," said Horton, with a chuckle; "had I done so the old chump would have said it served him right. I hardly expected that he would let me take a force and go across

the river to teach the rebels a lesson. He wouldn't have done it if he had known the facts in the case."

Captain Horton went to his quarters and ate supper, it being now almost night. He decided to wait till morning to start on his expedition, and did so. He was up bright and early and selected fifty men out of his company. He was careful to select men whom he knew to be in sympathy with him. They would do just as he told them to do, no matter what the order he might give them.

They set out soon after breakfast, and they were a jolly lot. They seemed to think they were bent on a holiday expedition; and so they did look upon it. They did not stop to reason that they were going for the purpose of carrying desolation into the homes of innocent people; the fact was that they were men who did not think that "rebels" were entitled to any consideration whatever.

Among the men selected by Captain Horton was an ex-Tory, one who had lived over in the neighborhood where the force was going, and this man was to tell the captain who were "rebels" and who were loyal people.

The members of the party were mounted on horses and rode at a swift pace; two hours and a half from the time of leaving Camden they rode into Winnsboro, and here they stopped and went into the one tavern of the place and called for liquor.

The landlord and his assistant hastened to set out the wine and brandy, and the redcoats began drinking. They were men who had an appetite for drink, and once they got started they could not tear themselves away, so they remained at the bar, drinking, for an hour at least, and by the time they got ready to go they were all pretty well along on the road toward intoxication.

They had been so busy drinking that they had paid no attention to anything else, and when they stepped out of doors they were treated to a surprise.

Their horses were gone!

They paused and stared in amazement. They could not understand the affair at all. Where were their horses?"

"Our horses have been stolen!" roared Captain Horton.

"So they have!" cried one of the men.

"Who could have done it?"

"The rebels, of course!"

"But how did they manage to do it without our seeing them?"

"Who looked out of doors after we went into the tavern? I didn't."

"Nor I!"

"Nor I!"

"None of us did," said Captain Horton; "we were too busy drinking to have eyes for anything save the liquor."

"But how did they manage to get away with fifty horses?" cried one of the men.

"There must have been a whole gang of them," froned another.

"Let's ask the tavernkeeper if he saw anything of the men who stole our horses," suggested one of the men.

Some of them rushed back into the tavern and made inquiries, but the tavernkeeper had seen nobody. "I was too busy serving you gentlemen with liquor to see anything that was going on outside," he said, and the redcoats could not gainsay this.

As they had not paid the tavernkeeper for the liquor, nor would do so—indeed, he had not expected that they would—he was not sorry that the horses had been taken.

Possibly the expression on his face told the redcoats this, for suddenly one cried: "I believe you have something to do with the affair, you cursed old wine-seller!"

The tavernkeeper turned pale and looked alarmed. "How could I, my dear friend?" he asked. "I was in the house the whole time and was busy, as you know."

"Yes, I know that, but you could have had your stableman instructed to take the horses while you kept us inside, drinking."

The others caught at this solution, even the captain, joining in. "I believe you are right, Johnson," he said. "let's go and take a look around the stable. And if we find anything to indicate that the stableman had anything to do with the affair we will string him up and come back and serve old Wine-keg the same way!"

"Gentlemen, gentlemen! I assure you that I know nothing of the affair!" the man cried. "And you will see that my stableman knows nothing of it, too. You will not find your horses there."

"We'll see, anyway," was the reply; and they hastened around the tavern and to the stable, where they found the stableman seated in the doorway, smoking a pipe.

"Here, you rascal!" cried Captain Horton, "where are our horses?"

The man took the pipe out of his mouth and stared at the redcoats in open-mouthed amazement.

"What d'ye mean?" he asked.

"What do I mean?" roared the captain. "Why, somebody stole our horses that were hitched out in front of the tavern, and I want to know who did it—that's what I mean!"

"Oh, that's it, hey? You want to know who stole your horses?"

"Yes, of course, you fool! And I believe you helped 'em all them!"

The stableman shook his head. "Yer mistook, mister," said; "I didn't he'p do et. I dunno who they wuz ez come et, but I saw 'em ridin' erway like all get out, jes' few minnets ergo."

"You did? You saw—who?"

"W'y, er lot uv fellers."

"A lot of fellows?"

"Yas."

"Why didn't you come and tell us?"

"'Cause I thort the fellers owned ther hosses."

"Didn't you see us ride up on those horses just a little while ago?"

The man shook his head. "Noap; I wuz in ther stable work, I guess; leastwise I didn't see ye come, an' when I seen them fellers ridin' erway I s'posed they wuz on their own hosses."

"How many of them were there?"

"Thar wuz a feller fur ev'ry hoss. I guess theer mus' hev be'n fifty uv 'em."

"Did they have uniforms on?"

"Noap; they wuz dressed like me."

"They weren't soldiers, then?"

"Ef they wuz they didn't hev on ther uniforms, ennyway."

"Which way did they go?"

"Thet way." The man pointed toward the west.

"In that way, eh?"

"Yas."

"And they're out of sight now. Great guns, men! What are we to do?"

"Let's try to get our horses back and have revenge on the cursed rebels at the same time, captain," replied one of the redcoats. "It must have been some of the young belds of this part of the country who did the trick."

The captain nodded. "That's so," he agreed; "we'll set out afoot and will burn every rebel house we come to, and will keep our eyes open for the gang that stole our horses—and when we find them they will suffer!"

"That's what they will, captain!"

Captain Horton and his men set out afoot, after entering the tavern and taking a couple of extra drinks to fortify them for the toil of walking, and they made their way along the road toward the west.

Presently they came to a house standing well back from the road, and the ex-Tory, pausing and pointing toward the house, said:

"There is the home of a rank rebel, Captain Horton."

"Good!" cried the captain; "we will set fire to the house and shoot anybody who attempts to hinder us! Forward, men!"

They leaped the fence and advanced toward the house, but when they were still twenty-five yards distant the windows, both upstairs and down, suddenly came open and a volley was poured through the openings from at least two score rifles and muskets!

CHAPTER V.

A CLEVER TRICK.

At least a dozen of the redcoats went down, dead and wounded, and the yells of anger and amazement from the uninjured were mingled with the curses and groans of the wounded, all combining to make a rather exciting and thrilling scene.

As for the redcoats, they were taken by surprise, and were badly demoralized. They had not been expecting anything of the kind, and it startled them and caused them to pause and falter. They did not know whether to stand their ground, to advance or to retreat. And while they stood there, thus undecided, there came a second volley and eight or ten more of their number went down.

This had the effect of arousing the redcoats to action, and Captain Horton ordered his men to retreat. He was somewhat muddled as a result of the liquor he had drank, and hardly knew what to do; so he decided to withdraw and take time to think the matter over.

The men were willing to retreat and they lost no time in obeying the command. They ran with all their might and leaped over the fence with wonderful agility. They showed considerable more haste in getting out of the yard than they had shown in getting in.

They withdrew to what they considered to be a safe distance, and here paused to hold a council of war and decide upon what course they should pursue. And while they are doing this we will go back to the evening before, and see what occurred after Dick Slater, Bob Estabrook and Mr. Sherlock set out to go to the home of George Davis.

They reached there without adventure, and found George and Annie there. George's folks had made the girl welcome, and she was in very good spirits, everything considered. George had a sister, Lizzie, who was about Annie's age, and the two were great friends and this made Annie feel quite at home.

"Didn't the redcoats pursue you?" asked George, in surprise, when the three put in their appearance, coming along at a leisurely pace.

"No," replied Mr. Sherlock.

"They didn't show their heads," said Bob.

"They did not?"

"No."

"That is strange."

"They were undoubtedly afraid to do so," said Dick.

"Perhaps there were not very many of them, after all," said George.

"That is the way we sized the matter up," agreed Dick.

"Well, I'm glad of it, as they might have followed you, and caused us trouble, had there been a large party of them."

"The trouble is only delayed, that is all," said Dick.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that the redcoats will go and get a large party and return."

"You think so?"

"I am sure of it. They have no doubt seen the dead body of Major Murdock, and they will not rest until they have had revenge."

"But he deserved his death, and they know it."

"They won't look at it in that light."

"No, I suppose not. They will doubtless regard it as being murder."

"At any rate, they will be eager to avenge his death, and will be back in this part of the country sooner or later with a force strong enough so that they can do about as they please."

"Well, we will see about that!" said George.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I have a force of young fellows, and that if they try any such tricks I will make them wish they hadn't."

"You have a force, you say?"

"I have."

"Of young fellows like yourself?"

"Yes."

"Young men who live in this neighborhood?"

"Yes."

"How many have you in the force?"

"Fifty."

"Fifty, eh?"

"Yes."

"That is quite a nice little force, eh, Bob?"

"You are right, Dick. Ah, if we only had the 'Liberty

Boys' here! We could make the redcoats take to the timber!"

"They will be here—in about three or four days; and that won't do us any good to-morrow or next day."

"No; and the redcoats will be back here looking for vengeance by to-morrow, at any rate."

"They will that! Well, perhaps they won't come strong but that we can stand them off with George's men and youths."

"I hardly think that a very strong force will come," said George; "they won't be looking for armed resistance, I know."

"True; well, we will do what we can to make it interesting for them."

"You don't think they will come back to-night, do you?" asked George, somewhat anxiously. "Because if youk I will get the boys together at once."

"It won't be a bad idea to get them together, George," said Dick; "then, if the redcoats should come we will be ready for them. And if they don't come we will be in shape to meet them to-morrow when they put in another appearance."

"All right; I'll get the boys together this evening."

George mounted a horse and rode away, and was gone perhaps half an hour. When he returned he told Dick that the youths would all be on hand within the hour.

By the time supper was over the youths began arriving, and it was not long before the entire force was on hand. Dick and Bob looked the youths over and were favorably impressed with them. They were all well armed, each having a rifle and a pair of pistols, as well as a long-bladed knife, and a dozen or so had swords buckled on. They were bronzed, healthy-looking young fellows, and it was evident that they would make a good fight if they made up their minds to do so.

When they learned who Dick and Bob were, they were delighted; and it was plain that they were determined to conduct themselves as to earn the good opinion of the two "Liberty Boys."

By unanimous consent, George having made the suggestion, Dick Slater was placed in command. "You know all about this business, Dick," said George, "and I want you to take charge. Whatever you say for us to do we will do; and if we don't make it interesting for the redcoats it will be strange!"

Dick accepted the command in the spirit in which it was tendered, and the first thing he did was to appoint four of the youths to act as scouts. They were to go out and stay until relieved by others.

"The redcoats might take it into their heads to come back to-night," said Dick, "and we want to be ready for them if they do so."

The redcoats did not show up that night, however, but Dick was confident they would put in an appearance some time during the day, so he told the youths to get ready for march, immediately after breakfast.

"Where are we going, Dick?" asked Bob.

"I think that it will be a good plan to go over in the vicinity of Winnsboro."

"Why so?"

"Well, you see, I am confident that the redcoats will strike for that point when they cross the Catawba, and we will get sight of them at Winnsboro, and will be enabled to keep track of them from that time on."

George Davis thought this would be a good plan, and urged the party of youths, followed by the cheers and encouraging words of the Davis folks, and of Mr. Sherlock and Bennie, set out.

They marched at a moderate pace, and when they came in sight of Winnsboro they saw that a goodly number of horses were tied in front of the tavern.

"Those are the redcoats' horses, I'll wager!" said Dick.

"I don't think you would lose, either, Dick," said Bob.

"They're in the tavern, getting something to drink," said George, referring to the redcoats.

A bright idea struck Bob Estabrook, who was always ready for a chance to do something exciting.

"Say, why can't we take the redcoats' horses, Dick?" he asked eagerly.

"And make them walk!" cried George Davis, in excitement.

Dick pondered a few moments. "We might try it, at any rate," he said presently.

"Sure; let's try it!" cried Bob.

The other youths were eager to make the attempt, as Dick could see, so he said: "I'll tell you what we'll do: We'll slip up close to the tavern, and while you boys are untying the horses I will go and keep watch on the redcoats, through the window. If you succeed in untying the horses before the owners come out I will join you and we will ride away; but if they come out before you get this done, we'll fire a volley and get back to the timber."

The youths said they would obey orders to the letter, and so the party stole forward. When they were within twenty yards of the horses Dick left the party and crept to the window and peered in. The redcoats were at the bar, drinking, and they showed no signs of being on the point of leaving the tavern.

"I think the boys will be able to get away with the horses in safety," thought Dick; "well, it will be a good joke on the redcoats."

He watched the British closely and kept an eye alternately on his friends, and when Bob gave him the signal he gave a glance through the window, saw that the redcoats were still lined up in front of the bar, and then hastened to where the youths were.

"Do they show any symptoms of being on the point of coming out, Dick?" asked Bob.

"No; and they have no one watching the horses. I think we are safe, and can take our time about going."

"That is good; then it will be best to go slowly and not make any noise."

"Yes; by so doing we may be able to get clear away before they learn that their horses have been taken."

"All right; tell the boys."

Dick sent the word the rounds, and then the youths mounted. It happened that there was a horse for every one, and two over, and these two were to be led. The party set out and rode slowly away toward the west. The youths kept a sharp lookout behind them, for they thought it possible the redcoats might learn that their horses had been taken, and come rushing forth.

Nothing of the kind happened, however, and the youths rode onward at a walk till they were a quarter of a mile away, and then Dick gave the word for them to increase the speed. This was done, and the horses were urged into a gallop, at which gait they continued till a farmhouse about a mile from Winnsboro was reached.

George Davis had informed Dick that this was the home of a strong patriot, and the youth decided to stop here.

"The redcoats will come this way as soon as they learn that their horses have been taken," said Dick; "and they will be so angry that they will be in the mood for doing as much damage to the patriots as possible. This being the case I think it will be best for us to stop here and wait for them to come, as this family is entitled to our protection."

"That's right," agreed Bob; "the redcoats will be like a lot of hornets after a boy has run a stick into their nest, and as we are the boys who had the stick, we should see to it that nobody suffers on account of it."

"I know the folks who live here," said George; "their name is Larkin."

"Good! Come on, then, George, and tell them why we are here, and all about it."

Several of the members of the Larkin family had come to the door and were looking at the youths curiously, and

Dick and George leaped off their horses and made their way to the house.

"How are you, Mr. and Mrs. Larkin, and Bob and Sadie?" said George.

"Oh, George Davis, is it you?" replied Mr. Larkin. "I'm glad to see you. I was beginning to think it was a band of redcoats in disguise, come to burn us out of house and home."

"And that is just what will happen, if we don't stay here and protect you, Mr. Larkin," said George.

"What! You don't mean it?"

"Oh, goodness!" from Mrs. Larkin.

Bob's eyes shone with excitement, but Sadie turned slightly pale.

"Yes," said George; "you see the horses the boys are on?" indicating the youths.

Mr. Larkin nodded.

"Well, they belong to redcoats—or did belong to them, I should say; they belong to us now—and the redcoats in question will be along here before long, mad as wet hens, and eager for revenge on us for taking the horses. So we thought we had better stay here and stand them off for you."

"Yes, yes!" from Mr. Larkin. "I'm mighty glad that you are going to do so. I don't want the redcoats to burn up my house, if it can be helped."

"They shan't do so, either—not if we can help it!" said George, and then he told them who Dick was. The Larkins had heard of Dick Slater, the famous scout and spy, and captain of the "Liberty Boys," and they greeted him cordially.

Then Dick and George went back to where the youths were and told them to ride around into the edge of the timber, just back of the stable, and alight and tie the horses.

This was done, and then the entire party went to the house. Dick took things in hand and placed half the force upstairs and half down. He placed Bob in command, upstairs, while he took charge downstairs.

"Now I think we will be able to give the redcoats a warm reception," he said.

"I hope so," said Mr. Larkin.

"As soon as they come in sight I think it will be well for you folks to go down in the cellar," said Dick; "you will not be in so much danger of being hit by bullets down there."

"Bob and the women folks can go down," said Mr. Larkin; "for me, I have a rifle, and I will stay up here and help you fight the scoundrels."

"I'm going to stay up and help fight, too, father!" "Bob, who was fifteen years old; "I'm not going down ph the cellar with mother and sis."

"All right; you may stay up and help fight, if you de to," his father said, and Bob's eyes shone with delill He got his rifle out and took his place among the cau youths, many of whom he knew.

Perhaps half an hour later the redcoats were seen air ing up the road. They were making very good time, " were not long in reaching the farmhouse. As we l already seen, they were given two volleys by the youth " the house and retired to a safe distance to hold a cou " and decide what they should do, leaving a score of ter number lying in the yard, either dead or wounded.

CHAPTER VI.

CAPTAIN HORTON SURPRISED.

"What will they do now, do you think, Dick?" as George.

"It is hard telling what they may decide to try to George."

"Do you think they will make another attack?" as Bob Larkin, eagerly.

Dick eyed the boy and smiled as he said: "I believe wish they would do so, Bob."

"I'd like to get one more shot at them, that's a fa was the reply.

"It would be hard to foretell what action they n take," said Dick.

"You are right," agreed Bob Estabrook; "they h been hit a pretty hard blow, and they won't be eager have another try at us, with us intrenched in the ho while they are out in the open—at least that is the v I look at it."

"And I think you have it about right, Bob."

"Goodness! there are eighteen men down, out the said Bob, who had been counting; "and I believe that majority of them are dead, too, for they are mighty sti

"Twelve are dead, I think," said George; "and six wounded."

All watched the redcoats with interest, and preser they saw one leave his comrades and come back tow the house. As he came he drew a white handkerchief fr his pocket and waved it.

"He wants to have a talk," said Bob.

"Yes; I'll go to the door and see what he wants," replied Dick.

He opened the front door and stood there waiting. The redcoat, who was Captain Horton in person, approached till he was within twenty feet of the house, and then he paused.

"Well," he said, glaring at Dick fiercely, "I suppose you think you have done something wonderful, don't you?"

"I don't think so," replied Dick, quietly; "I know it."

"Oh, you know it, eh?" in a snarling voice.

"Yes."

"Then you think it praiseworthy to kill a lot of brave men, like these?" indicating his comrades lying about.

"Cowardly scoundrels, you mean!" said Dick, calmly.

"What's that!" cried the captain, in a rage. "Do you dare to talk in that fashion to my face? Why, I'd have you know, you accursed reb——"

"That will do!" interrupted Dick. "No names, please. If you have anything of importance to say, say it; if not—get out!"

The captain glared at the youth fiercely, but if he expected to frighten Dick Slater he was doomed to be disappointed. It took a great deal more than a look to cause that youth to flinch.

"Who are you, anyway?" presently asked the redcoat.

"None of your business."

"None of my business, eh?"

"Exactly."

"Well, you are about as insolent a young scoun——"

"Stop it!" cried Dick, drawing a pistol quick as a flash and leveling it; "I don't intend to stand here and listen to you call me names. State your business, if you have any; if you haven't, get away from here as quickly as you know how!"

The captain was very angry, but he saw that it would be dangerous to talk saucy to the youth. He made an attempt to gain some information, however, by asking: "How many of you are there in the house?"

"There is a sufficient number to enable us to give you and your crowd a thrashing," was Dick's cool reply; "and that is all you need to know about it."

"Humph!" the captain grunted, angrily, but had sense enough to see that he could gain no information from the youth. Then he said: "I have a proposition to make to you."

"Go ahead and make it."

"It is this: If you will let us have our horses, and will promise to not fire upon us, we will bury our dead com-

rades, take the wounded and go away and not bother you any more."

"I will promise that you shall not be fired upon," replied Dick; "and you can bury your dead comrades, and take your wounded away—and I will let you have a sufficient number of horses to carry the wounded men, too, but you can have no more. The uninjured men will have to walk."

"Say, but that will be an outrage—to keep our horses!" said the captain, angrily.

"You may think so; I don't."

"Well, I certainly do think so!"

"I can't help that."

"And you won't let us have our horses?"

"Only a sufficient number to carry away the wounded men on, as I have said."

"That is final? You won't change your mind?"

"No."

"You will be sorry if you don't!"

"I don't think so."

"You will find out! I will tell you that if you keep our horses, it will be the worst thing you ever did in your life!"

"Oh, stop threatening and get to work," said Dick, with a wearied air; "I am tired of listening to you."

"All right!" Then the redcoat motioned to his men, and they approached and entered the yard. Dick, who had remained standing in the doorway, said:

"Now, captain, I don't want a single one of your men to leave the front yard. Anything you want will be brought you by some of my men."

"Well, we need a spade."

"I will see that one is brought." Dick asked Mr. Larkin if he had a spade, and he said that he had. "There is one at the back of the house. Bob, you go get it and take it out to the redecoats."

Bob obeyed, and after taking the spade to the redecoats, came back in the house.

"Now, how many horses will you have to have for the wounded men?" asked Dick.

"Six," was the reply.

Dick sent six of the boys out to bring the horses, and they did so, after which they re-entered the house.

The redecoats carried the dead bodies of their comrades over across the road and buried them in the edge of the timber, and then they placed the wounded men on the horses and took their departure.

At the top of a hill half a mile away they paused a few moments and Captain Horton shook his fist in the direction of the house they had just left.

"Oh, but I'll make you suffer for this, you young scoundrel!" he grated. "I don't know your name, but I'll know your face if I see it again, and if I get a chance at you I will make you wish you had never been born!"

The captain did not know it, but the object of his wrath and remarks was at that moment within fifty feet of him, and heard and understood every word he uttered. Dick had followed the party of redcoats, keeping in the edge of the timber, and when they paused at the top of the hill he crept up close and was just in time to see the captain's action and hear what he said.

Dick was something of a dare-devil when the notion seized him, and he suddenly made up his mind to let the redcoat officer know who he was. So he called out:

"You don't know my name, you say? Then I'll tell you. It is Dick Slater, better known, perhaps, as the captain of 'The Liberty Boys of '76'!"

CHAPTER VII.

DICK AND THE CAPTAIN EXCHANGE "COMPLIMENTS."

Cries of amazement escaped the lips of the redcoats, while Captain Horton was almost stricken dumb, he was so surprised. He had not suspected that any one was within hearing distance, and now to learn that the very youth he was speaking of was within a few feet of him, and had heard and understood every word he had uttered was enough to make him dumb for a few moments. He speedily recovered the use of his faculties, however, and leaped toward the point from which the voice had sounded.

"Quick, men!" he cried; "come, and we will capture the saucy scoundrel!"

The men leaped forward and ran with all their might, and the party was soon within the edge of the timber, but nowhere could they see any sign of a human being. They were looking in every direction when a peal of mocking laughter came from back in the timber a ways.

"You might as well continue on your way," called out a voice; "you couldn't catch me in a hundred years. Just go on your way and don't waste any more time. Another thing: Don't come fooling around in this part of the country again. If you do, it will go hard with you!"

"Won't I come fooling around in this part of the country?" cried Captain Horton, red with rage. "Well, I'll show you, Mister Dick Slater, captain of 'The Liberty Boys of '76'!"

"You had better be warned and stay away."

"You had better be warned and get out of the country!" the captain replied. "If you don't, the 'Liberty Boys' will need a new man for captain!"

"Threatened men live long, you know, captain," was the reply.

"This will be an exception to the rule, then; for your days are numbered!"

"Oh, come, captain, don't talk so positive. You must slip up on it, you know."

"Not a bit of it! I know who you are, now, and you shall make it my business to get even with you for what you have done to-day."

"Oh, you are at liberty to try, of course; but you will fail."

"No, I won't fail. I have a double account against you and I will settle it in full."

"A double account?"

"Yes."

"What is the other?"

"The death of Major Murdock, which I am now convinced was your work."

"You are mistaken about that; I had nothing to do with the death of that scoundrel."

"Bah! Of course you would deny it!"

"No; if I had had anything to do with his taking I should be proud to acknowledge it, for if all I hear is true and I think it is, he was a deep-dyed villain who should have been killed long ago."

"Oh, of course, his enemies would have nothing good to say for him."

"Nor his friends, either, if they were to tell the truth."

"Bah! Well, you may go, now, but a reckoning day is coming."

"Oh, thank you!" mockingly. "And let me tell you, Mister Redcoat, that when the day of reckoning comes you will be there, ready to reckon with you!"

"Bah! you are a braggart!"

"Not at all, my friend. You will find that there is more of that quality in my make-up. You will find that I am ready to act—more so than to talk; but I had to talk this time, in order to hold my own against you, for you are a braggart, if ever there was one!"

"Bosh! Just wait till I get at you!"

"You can get at me right now, if you wish," was the defiant reply; "just tell your men to stay where they are and you come here, and we will have it out with any weapons you care to use. It doesn't matter to me—pistols, muskets, swords, anything you like."

"I shall not lower myself by engaging in a duel with you."

"No, I wouldn't, if I were you!" mockingly. "It is much safer not to do so!"

The captain hesitated and looked at his men in an undecided manner. "I have half a mind to take the fellow up on that proposition," he said; "I could cut him into bits with my sword, for he can know nothing of the use of the weapon of officers and gentlemen."

"I wouldn't do it, captain," said one of the men; "he may lure you into the timber and shoot you down. Then, too, the wounded men need attention, and the sooner we get to Winnsboro and a doctor, the better."

"That's so," the captain acknowledged; then he called out: "I shall not accept your proposition, as the wounded men, here, need to be gotten where they can have attention quickly; but the time will come when we shall meet, and then I will slice you up into bits as I would a tomato or potato!"

"Suit yourself," replied Dick; "but I think you will have some difficulty in doing the slicing."

"Not the least bit of difficulty!"

"You will change your mind after you have made the attempt."

The captain made no reply, but gave the word and the party started once more and made its way onward to Winnsboro, arriving there half an hour later. The wounded men were taken to rooms in the tavern, and the village doctor was sent for. He came at once, and did what he could for the wounded men—though his knowledge of surgery was not great. Still, he managed to dress the wounds, after a fashion, and gave the men such medicine as tended to ease their pains and lessen their suffering.

The captain then called for quill and ink and paper, and hastened to write a letter to Lord Rawdon, asking that one hundred men be sent at once. He told such a story as would make the commander likely to comply with his request, and when he had finished he sealed the letter and sent a messenger post haste to Camden.

The messenger rode the best of the six horses, and did not spare the animal. As a result he reached Camden at noon and delivered the message into Lord Rawdon's hands. Then he went to his quarters and ate dinner.

When Lord Rawdon read the message he became very much excited. Captain Horton had written that he had been ambushed and set upon by a horde of "rebels," and that he was at that moment surrounded by said "rebels," and that unless one hundred men were sent immediately his entire force would be slaughtered. This was false, of

course, but the captain shrewdly suspected that the commander would refuse to let the reinforcements come, otherwise, and would, moreover, order him to return with the remnant of his force. This, of course, the officer did not wish to do, as he had set his heart on avenging the death of Major Murdock, and also on getting revenge for the manner in which his men had been treated by Dick Slater and his party of "rebels."

Lord Rawdon, not knowing the truth of the matter, however, at once sent for an officer, a captain, and told him the news and ordered him to take one hundred men and go at once to the relief of Captain Horton and his men.

"Hasten!" he said; "don't lose a moment, for the captain and his men may be slaughtered, he says, and we must not permit that."

"Very well, sir; I will take the men and go at once," said Captain Sharp; then, after a few more words, he hastened out and to his quarters. He told the news to a number as he went, and it speedily traveled throughout the entire garrison, and the men became greatly excited.

"The idea of those country gawks getting up a force and attacking a force of British soldiers;" was the general cry. "It is outrageous!"

Captain Sharp could have had a force of a thousand men had he wanted it, and been authorized to take such a number. He had been instructed to take only one hundred men, however, so he selected that number, and, as soon as they were ready, set out.

They crossed the river and rode away at a gallop, being determined to get to their journey's end as quickly as possible. It might result in the death of Captain Horton's entire force if they were to go slowly.

Two hours of hard riding brought them to Winnsboro, and when they got there and found that Captain Horton was not surrounded by the enemy, and that that story was all a fake, they were at first quite angry. Then the captain took Captain Sharp to one side and explained to him his reason for sending the message.

"I knew Rawdon would not send any more men if he knew the truth," he said, "so I made that story up. Now you are here, Sharp, and I am going to ask that you keep the secret and help me punish these insolent rebels for what they have done. You were a friend of Major Murdock, too, the same as I was, and together we will make it so hot for the rebel people of this vicinity that they will wish they had behaved themselves and not shown fight."

"All right; I'm with you in this matter, Horton," replied Captain Sharp, who was just such another as Hor-

ton, and was not averse to plundering, pillaging and burning the "rebel" homes.

The two shook hands to bind the compact, and then they repaired to the bar of the tavern to have a drink and lay the plans for their campaign.

"The first thing to do," said Captain Sharp, "is to find and crush this band of young rebels you speak of."

"Yes, that's the first thing to do," agreed Horton.

"Where will we be likely to find it?"

"At the house where it was this morning, I judge."

"How far is that from here?"

"A mile."

"Well, let's go out there at once."

"I'm in for it; we'll go just as soon as we have another drink."

While they were taking this drink a rough-looking country youth, with a slouch hat and stoga shoes, rose from a seat at a table at one side of the barroom and walked quietly out of the room. This was Dick Slater, who had come to the tavern an hour before to spy on the redcoats and learn, if possible, what they intended doing.

"So they have secured reinforcements and are going to hunt the band of 'rebel' youths down and crush them, are they?" he said to himself. "Well, we'll see about that!" Then aloud he exclaimed: "Hello! whut d'ye want, mister?"

One of the redcoats had got in his way and presented his musket threateningly.

"What do I want?"

"Yas."

"I want you to give me the password before you can pass me."

"Ther password, mister?"

"Yes."

"I dunno no password."

"Then you can't pass!"

"W'y not?"

"I have just told you—because you haven't the password."

"But they didn' ax me fur no password w'en I come heer erwhile ergo."

"Oh, didn't they?"

"No."

"Then they neglected their duty; and because they did so is no reason I should."

"But I've gotter hurry home."

"I can't help that; you can't go."

"But I mus' go."

Dick was in earnest about wishing to get away in a

hurry. He knew that his friends were in danger, and wished to get back to the Larkin home and warn the young people. Also, he wished to give the redcoats an unpleasant surprise, and he would be unable to do so unless he got there fifteen minutes ahead of them. And here was this big-headed redcoat holding him back.

Of course, the fellow was doing it just because he could. He had had no orders to stop any one from passing, and he had sized Dick up as being a country youth and an easy subject to have some sport with.

"You can't go," he said.

"But I must go."

"You said that a while ago."

"I know I did, an' I meant et, too."

"Ha, ha, ha! You meant it, did you?"

"Yas."

A number of the redcoat's comrades had gathered about, and were grinning with delight, the scene being, to their minds, quite comical.

"You had better look out for him, Jack," laughed one. "he is beginning to talk in a threatening manner."

"I have my eye on him," replied the one addressed Dick. "I know he is a dangerous fellow, and I am not going to take any chances." He said this in a sarcastic tone.

If he had but known it he had told the truth when he said the supposed country youth was a dangerous fellow. He did not know it, but was soon to find it out.

Dick realized that he must get away from there very quickly. The two captains were likely to come out of the barroom at any moment, and Dick feared that if they caught his attention was attracted to him closely he might be recognized; so he decided to act, and at once.

Dick suddenly leaped forward and dealt the redcoat who had blocked his way, a blow fair between the eyes. It was a terrible blow, and the redcoat went down as if struck by a sledgehammer. The other redcoats stared at him with open-mouthed amazement. They were temporarily paralyzed and incapable of making a movement. This was to Dick's favor, and he took advantage of it. He bounded forward, dashed through the little circle of redcoats, ran out to the road, cut a halter-strap, leaped upon a horse and dashed away at full speed.

By this time the redcoats had recovered the use of their faculties. With wild yells they rushed out into the road.

"Stop, thief!"

"Halt! or you are a dead man!"

"Stop! or we will fire!"

Such were a few of the cries given utterance to by the

boats, but Dick paid no attention to them. Indeed, if the redcoats had any effect at all, it was to make him urge the fugitive to renewed exertions. He leaned forward upon the scoundrel's neck and slapped it on the shoulder, at the same time urging it onward by words.

The redcoats, seeing that the fugitive was not going to stop, leveled their muskets and fired a volley. But they waited too long, and very few of the bullets carried up. The noise of the firing brought the two captains out of the tavern in a hurry.

"What's going on here?" they cried in unison. "Why are you firing—and at what?"

"That scoundrel, yonder!" cried the redcoat named Dick Slater, who was the one who had caused all the disturbance. He had just struggled to his feet and was brushing the dust off his uniform. His eyes were rapidly swelling, the result of the blow Dick had given him, and he looked rather a disreputable-looking fellow, to say the least. "Who is he?" asked Captain Horton.

"I don't know; but he's a regular demon with his fists!" the redcoat growled. "Just look at my face!"

"Did he strike you?" asked Captain Sharp, in amazement.

"Yes—the scoundrel!"

"How did it happen?"

"Why, I stopped him and demanded that he give the password before being allowed to pass. He said he didn't know any password, and wanted to pass, anyway. I thought I would have a little fun with him; but, as it turned out, he had the fun and I was the one who got the worst of it."

"What did he look like?" asked Captain Horton, quickly. "Oh, he looked just like an ordinary country gawk," was the reply.

"I'll wager a five-pound note that it is that scoundrel, Dick Slater!" the captain cried excitedly.

"Do you think so?" exclaimed Captain Sharp.

"I do; it would be just like him."

"Well, let's pursue this rascal and capture him, if possible."

"All right; but we won't be able to catch him."

"You think not?"

"I'm sure of it, but we can try; we want to go in that direction, anyway."

"To horse, men, and after the scoundrel!" cried Captain Sharp.

The soldiers hastened to obey the order, and soon the fugitive party was dashing up the road in pursuit of the fugitive.

Dick had a good start, however. He was already a third of a mile away and riding at full speed, while the redcoats had yet to get under way. This would not give Dick much time, however, and so he urged his horse forward constantly.

It happened that Dick had been so fortunate as to secure the best horse of the entire bunch, and he gradually increased his lead so that when he reached the home of Mr. Larkin the party of redcoats were nearly half a mile away.

Bob Estabrook had been on the watch, and when he saw Dick coming at full speed on horseback, he knew that something was up. He immediately called George Davis and the band of youths together and told them to be in readiness for instant action.

"Dick is coming like a streak of greased lightning!" he said. "I have no doubt that the redcoats are pursuing him and he will want us to be ready for a fight the instant he gets here."

They opened the gate leading into the yard, and when Dick reached there he rode right in.

"Quick!" he cried as he leaped to the ground; "come up the road here, with me. The redcoats are coming and we must give them such a reception as will make them want to take the back track."

"Go ahead," said Bob; "we will follow you."

Dick led the way back up the road a distance of a hundred and fifty yards, being careful to keep within the edge of the timber so the approaching redcoats could not see them, and here he paused.

"Conceal yourselves behind the bushes and trees, boys," he said; "and as the redcoats approach take deliberate aim. And when I give the word, fire! Don't be afraid; there are at least a hundred of them, but we can thrash them, all right. The main thing is to take good aim and not give way to a feeling of nervousness."

"Oh, we're not a bit nervous, Dick!" grinned Bob. "We'll take good aim, and when we pull trigger there are going to be some redcoats take a tumble—eh, boys?" this last addressed to the youths.

Bob was shrewd. He was an old veteran, and there was not the least danger that he would become nervous, but by placing himself on an equality with the other youths he would be able to inspire them with a feeling of confidence. In fact, there was something about Bob that tended to inspire all around him with confidence, for he was so jolly, good-humored and matter-of-fact, withal, that it was hard to realize that danger threatened, so long as his face was where it could be seen.

"You are right, Bob," said George Davis. "I think the redcoats will be fewer in numbers after we have given them a volley."

The redcoats were now in sight and coming rapidly. They would be within range in another minute.

"Just imagine that each redcoat is a wild turkey and that you want turkey for dinner, boys," said Dick; "do this, and when you pull trigger, down will go a redcoat! It is as easy to kill a man as a turkey, if you hit him right."

On came the redcoats. The advance guard was almost even with the spot where the youths were secreted, and Dick gave the signal for his comrades to take aim. They leveled their rifles and muskets, and when Dick thought they had secured good aim he called out:

"Fire!"

Crash! roar! The volley rang out loudly, and that the youths had taken good aim was quickly proven, for at least a score of the redcoats tumbled to the ground.

A scene of confusion ensued. The redcoats shouted and cursed, while Captains Horton and Sharp yelled out loud commands.

"Fire!" roared one. "Charge the scoundrels!" roared the other.

The redcoats obeyed both commands. They fired a volley, and then charged straight toward the edge of the timber. As they came, Dick called out to the youths to fire, and they poured a volley from their pistols full into the faces of the enemy. A dozen or more went down, and the party was thrown into disorder, but they kept on advancing.

"Fall back, and fire as you go!" called out Dick, and the youths obeyed. They retreated, keeping themselves sheltered as well as they were able by the trees, and fired another volley from their pistols.

The redcoats were very angry, however, and Captains Horton and Sharp kept shouting orders for them to pursue the "rebels," and give them the bayonet, and the soldiers leaped from their horses and dashed into the timber in full pursuit of the youths.

As they came on they fired a couple of volleys, and one or two of Dick's youths went down. It could not be helped, however; the only thing to do was to keep on retreating, and this the youths did.

"We can outrun them," said Dick; "so keep right on going and as soon as we have distanced them we will reload our weapons and make for the house. We will be able to keep them from burning it, I think."

The youths ran with all their might, and gradually bent

around so as to come out somewhere in the vicinity of Mr. Larkin's stable. They reached it presently and entering, hastily loaded their muskets, rifles and pistols. They had just finished when the youths who had been placed on guard gave the alarm, stating that the redcoats were coming.

"All right, let them come!" said Dick, grimly. "Get ready, boys, and be prepared to give it to the scoundrels hot and heavy as soon as they come in range."

The youths took up positions where they would be enabled to fire through cracks in the side of the stable which was right alongside the road, and the redcoats would be within deadly range when they got opposite.

Evidently they thought they had driven the enemy away from the vicinity, for they came on without exhibiting any signs of fear, and the two captains were arranging the crowd, telling the men what to do.

"We will burn down this house, here!" cried Captain Horton; "it is the home of one of the worst rebels in this part of the country."

"Fire!" at this instant rang out Dick's voice. The youths had taken good aim, and at the word the volley rang out.

Nearly a score of the redcoats were unhorsed, killed or wounded, and shouts and curses went up on all sides. The horses kicked, reared and plunged, and the groans and shrieks of the wounded who were trampled by the horses' feet added to the excitement and terrors of the scene.

"Ready?" cried Dick. "Take aim!" Then after a few moments his voice again rang out:

"Fire!"

Crash! roar! Again the volley rang out and a great execution was done, for a dozen of the redcoats went down. Dick, who was watching affairs closely, saw that the redcoats were on the verge of a panic, and he determined to cause them to take to flight, if possible.

"Give them another volley, boys!" he cried, and the boys obeyed.

This had the desired effect. The redcoats were no proof against such a storm of bullets, at such close range, and they turned their horses and rode away as if they were afraid. Dick was after them.

Captains Horton and Sharp, both of whom were slightly wounded, rode after their men, calling on them to halt and come back, but the men would not obey—at any rate not until they were well out of range of the terrible fire of the youths' weapons. Then they stopped and waited for their commanders to come up.

"What do you mean by running like a flock of sheep?" said Captain Sharp, angrily.

"I never saw such a pack of cowards!" cried Captain Horton.

"Well, great guns! we couldn't help it," cried one of the men, "the horses ran away with us. We couldn't man-
age them."

"Bah!" snorted Sharp; "but I suppose a poor excuse better than none."

"If you had remained and charged up to the stable, we could have had the scoundrels at our mercy," said Horton; "you are able to fire but three volleys before having to reload, and they had fired the three. Now you have run away and given them a chance to reload the weapons, and they will meet with a storm of bullets if we return."

"What shall we do, Horton?" asked Sharp.

"I hardly know what to do, Sharp," was the reply. "It looks as if we are to have to give up and acknowledge that we have been thrashed by a gang of boys."

"It looks that way, sure."

"There is one thing about it, however, that takes away a good deal of the disgrace which might otherwise attach to the matter—Dick Slater, the famous captain of 'The Liberty Bunch' of '76' is in command of those young scoundrels." "Yes; and what he doesn't know about fighting isn't worth knowing."

"You're right about that."

"Well, one thing is certain, we must take care of our wounded comrades," said one of the soldiers.

"I think there will be no difficulty about that," said Captain Horton; "this fellow Slater seems to be willing that we should bury our dead and attend to our wounded. Unless he doesn't want to be bothered with the matter."

"Well, then, I'll tell you what let's do, Horton," said Captain Sharp, "let's communicate with him and get permission to bury the dead and take away the wounded; then we will return to Winnsboro and hold a council and decide what we shall do."

"That's a good idea, Sharp."

"Who will go forward—you?"

"I can do so, yes. I have had conversation with Dick Slater before."

"All right; go along. We will temporize with him now, but later on we will square accounts with him or know the reason why!"

"You are right about that, Sharp!"

Then Captain Horton, with his handkerchief waving, rode forward and approached the stable. He rode up to within fifty yards of the building and stopped.

"Hello!" he called out. "I wish to speak to you, Dick Slater!"

Dick immediately stepped out of doors and faced the redcoat captain. "What do you want?" he asked.

"I wish to ask permission to bury our dead and remove the wounded."

"Very well; the permission is granted."

"And you won't fire upon us?"

"Fire on a flag of truce? What do you think we are—savages?"

"Oh, no; I simply wished to make sure, that is all."

"Well, you may advance with the assurance that you will not be molested—that is, so long as your men confine themselves to the work of burying their dead comrades and removing the wounded. If they should try any tricks, then there would be trouble."

"Of course; but we shall do nothing of the kind."

"If you are wise you will not!"

The captain grunted out something unintelligible and rode back to where he had left the others.

"What did he say?" asked Captain Sharp.

"He said it would be all right."

"Then we may go back and bury our dead and remove our wounded without being fired upon?"

"Yes."

"Do you suppose it will be safe to trust to the fellow's word?"

"Yes, I think so."

"You had one experience of the same kind with him, and he kept his word?"

"Yes. Oh, I am not afraid that he won't keep his word."

"Very well, then; let us go back there and get to work."

"The men will have to be very careful, though," said Captain Horton; "if any of them should try to do anything in the way of getting a shot at those young scoundrels it will be all up with us."

"I'll caution them."

Captain Sharp did so, and the men said they would be very careful and not do anything to anger the youths. Then the entire party went back to the scene of the encounter. A couple of spades were borrowed from Mr. Larkin, and a large excavation was made in the edge of the timber, opposite the stable, and in this the dead bodies were placed and covered over.

Then the loan of a team and wagon was procured from Mr. Larkin, and the wounded men were placed in the wagon and taken to the tavern at Winnsboro. The team and wagon were then returned.

As soon as they were safely back at the tavern the two

captains held a council of war. Seated at a table in the barroom, with a couple of bottles and glasses between them, they talked the matter over in all its phases.

They were united in saying that they had failed miserably in the work which they had set out to do. "There is just this about it," said Captain Horton: "We are not versed in the style of warfare that our enemies indulge in."

"You are right," agreed Captain Sharp; "they are people who have lived in this vicinity all their lives, and know every foot of the ground, and we don't stand much chance with them. If it was an army that would come out and meet us openly it would be different; then we would have some chance and would know what we were doing."

"That's so; and as it is, now, we don't know anything about it."

"Not much, that's a fact; I think it is plain, though, that we will have to have more men if we are to do anything at all with these scoundrels."

"Then you think we had better send back to Camden for more men?"

"We ought to have more men, there is no doubt about that; but I doubt if Rawdon will let any more come."

"You think he won't?"

"Well, I don't think he would let you come if I hadn't wrote him that cock-and-bull story about being surrounded by the enemy, and in imminent danger of being slaughtered."

"Very good; then we'll write him another message of similar import, and have him send us another hundred men."

"We might do that."

"We must do it if we are to have the men sent—and we must have them; there is no two ways about that."

"You are right; I shall never rest until we have squared accounts with that accursed young scoundrel, Dick Slater."

"Nor shall I."

"Shall I write the message to Rawdon at once?"

"Yes, at once."

The other went to the landlord and procured quill, paper and ink, and wrote a letter which he handed to the other for his inspection. Captain Sharp read it, nodded approvingly, and said: "Very good; that ought to bring the men."

"I think it will."

The letter was sealed, given into the hands of one of the soldiers, who was instructed to ride to Camden with all possible despatch, and place the message in the hands of the commander.

The redcoat nodded, mounted his horse and rode away; and then the two captains returned to their bottles and glasses.

CHAPTER VIII.

DICK A PRISONER.

"Well, we licked them!"

"So we did."

"We gave them a good thrashing!"

"Yes; I think we have taught the British a lesson."

"They will be careful how they fool around us."

"So they will."

The speakers were the band of youths who, under Slater's leadership, had given the redcoats such a thrashing. They had just emerged from the stable, after the redcoats had taken their departure.

"What is the next thing on the programme, Dick?" asked Bob Estabrook.

"The next thing, Bob, is to go back in the timber and find our boys who fell under the fire from the hands of the redcoats when we were retreating. Three went, I think, and all may not be dead. We may be able to save the life of one or more of them."

"They are Gerald Harkley, Maurice Moore and Sanford," said George Davis. "Oh, I hope that they are not dead!"

The youths hastened back through the timber and came upon one of the bodies lying still and stark on the ground.

"It is Maurice!" said George, in awed tones, "and he is—dead!"

"Yes," said Dick, "he is dead, poor boy; but he died in a good cause."

"Four of you boys carry the body to our house," said George; "we will keep it there till his folks come, and then bury it."

Four of the youths stopped to do as George said, and the other three hastened onward. Soon they came upon another body—that of Gerald Harkley, and it was stiff and stark. He was dead.

George told four of the youths to carry the body of Gerald to the house, and then they moved on a little farther and they found Tom. He was not dead, but was unconscious from loss of blood. Dick made an examination and said he thought the youth would get

proper care. Then four of the youths lifted their
injured comrade and bore him tenderly to the house.

Dick went to work with Tom, while the rest gave such
aid as was possible, and a few minutes later the
injured youth came to. He was weak, but recognized
his comrades, with a smile, and asked, feebly: "Did we
win?"

"We did that, Tom!" said George. "They have gone
to Winnsboro and were only too glad to get away."
Dick was glad of that!

The relatives of the two dead youths were sent for, and
came soon. They were greatly grieved when they
saw the dead youths, but they seemed to realize that their
loved ones had died in a good cause, and made the best of
the matter. The bodies were interred that evening, and
as soon as it was dark Dick set out on a scouting ex-
pedition.

Dick went in the direction of Winnsboro, as he knew that
it would be the proper place to look for the redcoats. Dick
strongly suspected that the enemy would be up to some
trick or other, and he wished to find out what the trick
was to be.

The moon came up, full and bright, and it was almost as
bright as day. "It will be dangerous trying to spy on the
redcoats," thought the youth; "I will have to be very
careful."

Dick approached the vicinity of Winnsboro very cautiously,
for once in his life Dick was fooled. He was still a
mile or a mile away from the edge of the village when
he was suddenly leaped upon by a dozen redcoats, who had
been concealed behind an immense fallen tree.

Dick struggled, but it availed him nothing, for the odds
were too great against him. He was soon overpowered,
and the jubilant redcoats dragged him off to the village
and into the tavern. The two captains were seated at a
table drinking and playing cards, and looked around in
astonishment when the soldiers came bustling in with their
prisoner.

"What's all this?" exclaimed Captain Sharp.

"We have captured a spy, captain!" was the reply.

"Captured a spy, eh?"

"Yes."

"Who is he?"

"I don't know."

"What do I do!" suddenly cried Captain Horton, who had
caught sight of the prisoner's face. "It is that rebel
scoundrel, Dick Slater!"

"What!" cried Captain Sharp. "The captain of 'The
Liberty Boys of '76'?"

Captain Horton nodded, a fiendish look of joy on his
face. "The same!" he said. Then he got up from the
table and stepping forward, faced Dick and glared at him
with a look of hatred.

"So, we meet again, do we?" he grated.

"It would seem so," was Dick's cool reply.

"You won't be so cool about the matter by the time
I get through with you!" snarled the captain.

"You think not?" was the imperturbable reply.

"I know it!"

"Then there isn't any need of my making any state-
ments regarding the matter, if you know it; for when
a person knows a thing, that settles it."

"Well, that is settled; for I am going to make you suffer
for what you have done, you young scoundrel!"

"It will be just about like you to do it, you old scoun-
drel!" was the retort.

"What's that! Do you dare call me a scoundrel?" al-
most yelled the captain, red with anger.

"And why not? You called me one."

"But—that is different."

"I don't see how it is different."

"You don't?"

"No."

"It is plain enough; I am a British officer, while you
are——"

"An American officer, and as good a man as you or any
other British officer, at any time and anywhere!"

"Bah! you are insolent!"

"No, I am merely telling the truth."

The captain glared at Dick for a few moments and
then said: "Can it be possible that you think yourself the
equal of a British officer?"

Dick bowed. "The equal of any, and the superior of
the majority, if such as I have seen in this country are
fair samples of the whole."

Captain Horton turned and looked at Captain Sharp.
"What do you think of that for an exhibition of impudence,
captain?" he asked.

"It is a very good exhibition," was the reply; "it is just
about what I would expect to hear from this fellow Slater.
I've heard a great deal about him since coming to
America."

"Well, I guess the stories we have heard regarding his
impudence were not stretched any," growled Captain
Horton.

"Not a bit."

"Do you know what I am going to do with you, Dick
Slater?" asked Horton, again turning to the prisoner.

"I haven't the least idea."

"I suppose you have some curiosity regarding the matter, however?" in an ironical tone.

"No great amount," was the calm reply; "I suppose I shall find out soon enough."

Captain Sharp burst into loud laughter, and even the soldiers could not help smiling, and some looked admiringly at the handsome, manly looking prisoner.

"There's coolness and sang froid for you, Horton!" cried Captain Sharp.

"Yes, he's cool enough, that's certain," was the reply; "but I think that before I get through with him I shall have taken some of that out of him."

"What are you going to do with him, anyway, Horton?" his fellow-officer asked.

"Do you remember Major Murdock?"

"Yes."

"You know the fate that overtook him?"

"Yes—hanged, after standing for perhaps hours on the top of a slippery rock in the middle of the Broad River."

"Exactly; well, I think this fellow had something to do with that business, and I am going to serve him the way he helped serve the major."

"I have already told you that I had nothing to do with that affair," said Dick, quietly; "not that I expect to escape the fate which you have planned for me by denying it, but because it is the truth. I was a witness to the affair, but had no hand in it."

"Who did do it, then?"

Dick shook his head. "You will never know from me," was his quiet, decided reply. "I am confident, though, that the major deserved the fate which overtook him."

"Oh, of course you would think so!"

"So would any fair-minded person. You know it."

"I don't know anything of the kind!" snarled the captain.

"Yes, you do; but you won't acknowledge it, that is all."

"Bah! you are altogether too free with your tongue. I think I will put a stop to its wagging, and at once."

"Say, you are not going to take him away over to the Broad River to hang him, are you?" asked Captain Sharp.

The other shook his head. "No, that would be too much trouble and take too much time," he replied; "we will take him out in the timber, back of the tavern, and hang him there!"

"That is the thing to do. There is no need of going to so much trouble."

"No, I wouldn't walk over to the river for a dozen such fellows."

"I wouldn't walk ten paces to see you hung—
Dick, quietly.

"You insolent hound!" cried Captain Horton. "I must want to hasten your death."

"Oh, no; I have no desire to do that."

"Well, the manner in which you are talking has a tendency to bring that about."

"Is that so?"

"It is."

"I can't help it. I have always made it a rule about what I please, and when I please."

"A very bad practice, as you will soon find."

"Oh, I don't know about that. Say, captain, remember the little talk we had yesterday in the timber." Captain Horton frowned. "Yes, I remember," he growled; "I told you at the time that I would be sorry for what you had done."

"I know you did; but you haven't made me sorry."

"Perhaps not; but I shall do so very soon."

"I doubt it; but see here, captain, do you remember I challenged you to fight me, and that you said we would meet some other time?"

"Yes, I remember it."

"Well, then, why not have the affair out now? It is your choice of weapons. It doesn't matter to me whether you choose—swords, pistols, muskets, anything."

Captain Sharp burst into loud laughter. "There is no business for you, Horton," he said; "wants to fight a duel—ha, ha, ha!"

"You must think I am a fool, Dick Slater!" cried Captain Horton, angrily. "Why should I fight a duel with you when I have you a prisoner in my hands? That would be the work of a fool, sure enough!"

"But you feel confident that you are my superior with the sword, do you not, captain?" asked Dick, calmly.

"Yes, I know that."

"You mean you just think you know it. You mean you are my superior."

"What! I am not your superior with the sword?" most roared Captain Horton.

"Certainly you are not. You are not even matched with the weapon." Dick spoke calmly and with confidence.

"Why, why—I have half a mind to—to fight you, impudent young scoundrel, just for the satisfaction of showing you that you know nothing of the use of a gentleman's weapon!" sputtered the officer.

"I would be more than delighted to have you sp-

"If you are able," said Dick; "I don't think you are do it."

"It is just trying to get you angry enough to fight him," said Captain Sharp; "it is a cunning trick, and I don't pay any attention to what he says. Let's take him and string him up and put an end to his chatter." This gave Captain Sharp a peculiar look. "You are a shrewd fellow," he said, coldly; "if I get out of this I shall try to meet you some time and tell you just what I think of you."

"That's all right," laughed Sharp; "I don't think you get out of this scrape."

"Perhaps not; but I have gotten out of a number of equally just as bad ones in my time."

"It is time your career was brought to an end, then," he heartless reply.

"And we'll bring it to an end very quickly!" said Captain Horton.

"That's the way to talk!" from Captain Sharp. "Don't string up rebels as fast as you get hold of them—my motto!"

"Suppose you are proud of your motto?" remarked coldly and cuttingly.

"Yes, I am."

"You should expect you to be, for you have the look of a"

"What's that! You dare call me a brute?" The captain was angry.

"I certainly do dare call you a brute, for such you certainly are. Now, perhaps you would like to try conclusions with me, sword in hand!"

"No, I shall do nothing of the kind; I shall, however, be in being present and seeing you hung!"

"Of course; I expected that. There will be no danger to you in doing that." Dick spoke cuttingly, and escaped the lips of Captain Sharp.

"Come on, Captain Horton," he cried, leaping up from the ground; "let's take the saucy rebel out and string him up without any more parleying!"

"All right, I'm willing," said Captain Horton; "bring them along, men."

The two captains strode out of the tavern, and behind them came the redcoats with the prisoner. They made their way to the timber, which stood a hundred yards back from the tavern. The entire force of redcoats, about ninety in number, were there, for all wanted to see the affair through to the finish. Many of the redcoats were of the opinion that the prisoner would die like a brave man; but they expected to hear him beg and plead.

The party came to a stop under a large tree which had limbs extending almost straight out from the trunk. "This will do nicely," said Captain Horton. "Who has a rope?"

No one had a rope, so a man was sent to the stable to get one from the stableman. The redcoat was soon back with the rope, and a noose was quickly made in one end, and this noose was placed over Dick's neck. Then a nimble redcoat climbed the tree with the other end of the rope in his mouth and he passed the end over the limb and down to his comrades below, who seized the rope and made ready to pull at the word from their captain.

"Ah, ha! now I think I shall have the pleasure of hearing you beg and plead for your life!" cried Captain Horton, grinning like a fiend.

"I'll wager you anything you like that you will not have the pleasure of doing anything of the kind," was the calm reply.

"We'll see!"

"Yes, you'll see."

"We'll make you beg, and I'll wager anything on it!"

"You'd lose."

"You think we can't make you plead for your life, eh?"

"I know you can't. Just go ahead with your cowardly work! You won't hear a word out of me."

"We won't, eh?"

"No!"

"We'll see; men, haul him up!"

CHAPTER IX.

"THE LIBERTY BOYS' BATTLE FOR LIFE."

A party of young men of an average age of twenty years was riding along the road leading southward into Winnsboro. It was night, yet the full moon made everything as light, almost, as day. The youths were riding at a gallop, but the horses moved in a labored fashion as if tired. Doubtless they had traveled many weary miles that day.

"We ought to come to a village pretty soon if that man back yonder told the truth," remarked one of the leading riders to his companion.

"That's right; let's see: What did he say the name of the village was—Winnsboro?"

"Yes, that's it—Winnsboro. We must be pretty nearly there."

"I should think so. But we will have to be a little bit

careful, won't we? You know he said that he thought that there was a party of redcoats there."

"Yes; when we come in sight of the place I will advance alone and do a bit of spywork. We don't want to run into an ambush, you know."

"No; it would be bad, and Dick would think we were very careless."

"That's right—ah! there is the village! You boys stop here and I will go on and see if the redcoats are there."

"All right, Mark."

The horsemen came to a stop, and the one who seemed to be in command, and who had been addressed as Mark, leaped to the ground and stole forward on foot. It was only about two hundred yards to the tavern, and Mark approached slowly and cautiously. As he drew near he saw that quite a number of redcoats were in front of the building. There was something of interest transpiring within the tavern, he judged, for he could hear loud voices there, and the attention of all the men on the outside seemed to be attracted in that direction.

"I must see what is going on in there," thought Mark, and making a half-circuit he approached the side of the building and looked in through a half-open window. What he saw almost made him cry out aloud. "Great guns!" he exclaimed to himself, "there is Dick—and he is a prisoner! Jove! we must rescue him!"

The watcher was Mark Morrison, one of the member of the company of "Liberty Boys" of which Dick Slater was the captain, and the party of horsemen—as the reader has surmised—was the "Liberty Boys." Dick and Bob had come on ahead, and, as we have stated in a former chapter, Dick was looking for them to reach that part of the country in about three days. By riding hard, however, they had made better time and had got to Winnsboro ahead of time. And it was lucky for Dick that they had done so.

Mark watched the scene within with breathless interest, and listened to the conversation between Dick and the two captains. "So they are going to hang Dick, are they?" he said to himself. "Well, we'll see about that!"

Mark waited till the party started, and as soon as he saw that they were going to the timber at the rear of the tavern he hastened back to where the other "Liberty Boys" were, and told them what was in the wind.

"Dismount and lead your horses into the edge of the timber and tie them," he commanded; "then we will make our way around to where the scoundrels are and put a stop to their proceedings!"

The youths obeyed the command with alacrity, and soon the entire party, consisting of nearly a hundred hardy

youths, was moving through the timber in the direction that would take them to the spot where they expected to find the redcoats.

They soon came in sight of the scene, and the youth ran cold and then almost boiled with anger as he saw that their beloved young leader, Dick Slater, tied and unable to move, he could not use his arms at all, was standing beneath the limb of a tree with a rope around his neck.

Mark gave a signal, and the "Liberty Boys" cocked their muskets and leveled them. At the instant Captain Horton ordered the redcoats who held the rope to haul Dick up, but the youth said, "Wait a moment, before you finish your work, captain. I have the noose; I have something to say to you, and I wish to say it with a rope around my neck."

"All right; hold, men!" called out the captain. Then he stepped forward and lifted the noose off the neck.

"Now," he said, "what is it you wish to say?"

"It is this," said Dick: "Down with the king! Live Liberty!"

A curse escaped the lips of Captain Horton, and he made a motion as if to strike the daring youth in the face. Then he bethought him that there was another way to punish the prisoner—by hanging him, as he had intended to do.

Just as the British officer was going to put the rope around Dick's neck, however, there came a volley from the "Liberty Boys' " muskets and the officer fell dead, and also a number of the redcoats. Dick darted away with great speed. He realized that friends were at hand and that he had given them a good chance to fire on the redcoats, who were in danger of killing him.

He ran with all his might and was soon out of sight, and then the crack! crack! crack! of the weapons told that a sharp engagement was taking place.

Fearing that he might again fall into the hands of the enemy, Dick made a half-circuit and came in behind where his unknown friends were stationed, and just as the firing ceased. At the same time there was a sound of rushing feet and on the air rose the old, familiar cry of: "Down with the king! Long live Liberty!"

"It is my 'Liberty Boys'!" Dick exclaimed. "Now we will make it warm for the redcoats in this country, or know the reason why!"

The "Liberty Boys" had charged the redcoats and quickly scattered them, causing them to flee for their lives, and the majority fled back to the shelter of the tavern, seeming to think it the safest place for them.

the "Liberty Boys" came back they encountered and he was greeted with delight, and the rope hold-arms was quickly cut, making him free again.

"Well, well! You boys got here just in time!" said Mark. "I'm glad we did get here in time!" said Mark.

"You may be sure I am, Mark!"

The youths all expressed their delight at having got in time to save Dick's life, and then they made their way where the horses were, and, untying them, mounted and rode away, Dick riding behind Mark.

They knew a road that would take them around the village and they got past it without being seen by the red-

Fifteen minutes later they were at the Larkin home, Bob Estabrook was tickled when he saw his comrades. When he learned how near Dick had come to being hung, he gave utterance to a whistle. "They'll get you one of these days, Dick," he said; "after this you had better let me go with you when you go on a spying expedition."

The redcoats received reinforcements, until there were nearly three hundred of them, and they set out to try to catch the "Liberty Boys" out; but they found this was a very big undertaking. Reinforced by the fifty youths

under George Davis, the youths made a strong fight, and their knowledge of woodcraft stood them in good stead and enabled them to equalize things.

True, they were hard pressed a number of times, and in one instance had to wage a battle for life, but they finally pulled through, though it was a very hard struggle; and finally the redcoats had to give up the fight and return to Camden, as news came that the patriot army was coming down from the North to offer the British army battle.

As for the "Liberty Boys," they went over across the Catawba, determined to take part in the battle when the time came. They were never so happy as when striking strong blows at the British.

THE END.

The next number (68) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS LOST; OR, THE TRAP THAT DID NOT WORK," by Harry Moore.

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